

A stylized graphic of a circuit board with white lines and circles on a teal background, positioned on the left side of the page.

# VCUDA

VERMONT COMMUNICATIONS UNION DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

*Building Connectivity & World-Class Broadband in Vermont*



# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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# PRIORITY I: INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

*CUDs plan to build broadband networks in 2021. The size and scope of those projects are limited by our access to funding. These are existing and possible sources, and how you can help right now:*

## VEDA

- Limit Remainder of Broadband Loan Program to CUDs and CUD private partners
- Increase lending authority to at least \$34 million (VTA bonding limit). CUDs could use double that amount over next 2-3 years.
- Increase maximum loan size to \$15 million
- Increase loan loss reserve to support lending criteria more suitable to start-up

## CARES ACT

- Ensure remaining CARES funding is directed to solutions that further 100/100 Mbps goal.
- Focus remaining funds on CUD-led or CUD private partner projects
- Continue to allocate these funds for capacity-building & org. support

## FEDERAL GRANTS

- New Federal funding for the construction of broadband infrastructure should pass through CUDs to ensure accountability
- No funding should be provided without very specific performance requirements related to universal service, particularly for providers who have not met previous build expectations

# PRIORITY II: COORDINATION

*Bringing future-proof broadband to all Vermonters is a significant challenge. All players must cooperate and coordinate to speed development.*

## CUDS

- Awarding grants and loans “per CUD” discourages collaboration and merging
- State award size should reflect metrics that reflect the need: road miles; unserved and underserved addresses within the district; number of towns or population.

## ELECTRIC UTILITIES

- Support electric utilities in providing waivers or subsidies for make-ready work or pole attachments for broadband infrastructure.
- Ensure accountability by prioritizing CUDs and CUD private partners as recipients.

## STATEWIDE

- Add CUDs to the list of entities that receive notification of private telecommunication investment in their region.
- Elevate broadband as a priority by creating an Office of Broadband reporting to the Governor to provide statewide strategic vision and coordination

# PRIORITY III: STRENGTHENING CUDS

*Building strong CUD organizations is the best strategy for achieving universal broadband. That is our explicit goal and we are responsible to our member municipalities.*

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Transfer to CUDs the existing public fiber assets developed by the VTA for the purpose of promoting broadband within their territories.
- CUDs are best positioned to hold, develop and leverage these assets for the public good.

## ORGANIZATIONAL

- Assist CUDs organizational development through capacity-building grants for general operations, business plan development and engineering.
- Allocate based on size and need, not per CUD.

## REGULATORY

- CUDs operate in a competitive marketplace but are also public bodies subject to open meetings and public record requests.
- Ensure CUDs can restrict public access to business-sensitive information and recover costs of broad, sweeping records requests.
- Amend CUD statute to explicitly provide guidance on limiting access to public records & allow cost recovery for responding to requests.